

09/979541

JG14 Rec'd PCT/PTO 06 NOV 2001

Practitioner's Docket No. 65961-0015

## CHAPTER II

TRANSMITTAL LETTER  
TO THE UNITED STATES ELECTED OFFICE (EO/US)

(ENTRY INTO U.S. NATIONAL PHASE UNDER CHAPTER II)

<u>PCT/AT00/00123</u>	<u>05 May 2000</u>	<u>06 May 1999</u>
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.	INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE	PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED

LINING FOR COLUMNS OF AUTOMOBILES  
TITLE OF INVENTION

Peter Walter, Richard Hahnekamp and Karl Steiner  
APPLICANT(S)

**Box PCT**  
**Commissioner for Patents**  
**Washington D.C. 20231**  
**ATTENTION: EO/US**

*NOTE: To avoid abandonment of the application, the applicant shall furnish to the USPTO, not later than 20 months from the priority date: (1) a copy of the international application, unless it has been previously communicated by the International Bureau or unless it was originally filed in the USPTO; and (2) the basic national fee (see 37 C.F.R. § 1.492(a)). The 30-month time limit may not be extended. 37 C.F.R. § 1.495.*

**WARNING:** Where the items are those which can be submitted to complete the entry of the international application into the

## CERTIFICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. 1.10\*

(Express Mail label number is **mandatory**.)

(Express Mail certification is optional.)

I hereby certify that this correspondence and the documents referred to as attached therein are being deposited with the United States Postal Service on this date November 6, 2001, in an envelope as "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee," Mailing Label Number EL 781 398 505 US, addressed to the: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

*Janice E. Laurro*  
(type or print name of person mailing paper)

Janice E. Laurro  
Signature of person mailing paper

**WARNING:** Certificate of mailing (first class) or facsimile transmission procedures of 37 C.F.R. 1.8 cannot be used to obtain a date of mailing or transmission for this correspondence.

**\*WARNING:** Each paper or fee filed by "Express Mail" **must** have the number of the "Express Mail" mailing label placed thereon prior to mailing. 37 C.F.R. 1.10(b).  
"Since the filing of correspondence under § 1.10 without the Express Mail mailing label thereon is an oversight that can be avoided by the exercise of reasonable care, requests for waiver of this requirement will **not** be granted on petition." Notice of Oct. 24, 1996, 60 Fed. Reg. 56,439, at 56,442.

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*national phase are subsequent to 30 months from the priority date the application is still considered to be in the international state and if mailing procedures are utilized to obtain a date the express mail procedure of 37 C.F.R. §1.10 must be used (since international application papers are not covered by an ordinary certificate of mailing - See 37 C.F.R. §1.8.*

*NOTE: Documents and fees must be clearly identified as a submission to enter the national state under 35 USC 371 otherwise the submission will be considered as being made under 35 USC 111. 37 C.F.R. § 1.494(f).*

1. Applicant herewith submits to the United States Elected Office (EO/US) the following items under 35 U.S.C. 371:
  - a. ☒ This express request to immediately begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)).
  - b. ☒ The U.S. National Fee (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(1)) and other fees (37 C.F.R. § 1.492) as indicated below:

09/979541-0002

2.Fees

CLAIMS FEE	(1) FOR	(2) NUMBER FILED	(3) NUMBER EXTRA	(4) RATE	(5) CALCULATIONS
[X]*	TOTAL CLAIMS	1- 20 =	0	x \$ 18.00 =	\$
	INDEPENDENT CLAIMS	1- 03 =	0	x \$ 84.00 =	
	MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable) + \$280.00				
BASIC FEE**	<p>[ ] U.S. PTO WAS INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION AUTHORITY          Where an International preliminary examination fee as set forth in § 1.482 has been paid on the international application to the U.S. PTO:          [ ] and the international preliminary examination report states that the criteria of novelty, inventive step (non-obviousness) and industrial activity, as defined in PCT Article 33(2) to (4) have been satisfied for all the claims presented in the application entering the national stage (37 CFR 1.492(a)(4)) ..... \$100.00          [ ] and the above requirements are not met (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)) ..... \$710.00</p> <p>[X] U.S. PTO WAS NOT INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION AUTHORITY          Where no international preliminary examination fee as set forth in § 1.482 has been paid to the U.S. PTO, and payment of an international search fee as set forth in § 1.445(a)(2) to the U.S. PTO:          [ ] has been paid (37 CFR 1.492(a)(2)) ..... \$740.00          [ ] has not been paid (37 CFR 1.492(a)(3)) ..... \$1040.00          [X] where a search report on the international application has been prepared by the European Patent Office or the Japanese Patent Office (37 CFR 1.492(a)(5)) ..... \$890.00</p>				
	Total of above Calculations = 890.00				
SMALL ENTITY	Reduction by ½ for filing by small entity, if applicable. Affidavit must be filed. (note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28)				
	Subtotal 890.00				
	Total National Fee \$ 890.00				
	Fee for recording the enclosed assignment document \$40.00 (37 CFR 1.21(h)). (See Item 13 below). See attached "ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET".				
TOTAL	Total Fees enclosed \$ 890.00				

\*See attached Preliminary Amendment Reducing the Number of Claims.

i. [ ] A check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ to cover the above fees is enclosed.

ii. [X] Please charge Account No. 18-0013 in the amount of \$ 890.00.

A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

**\*\*WARNING:** *"To avoid abandonment of the application the applicant shall furnish to the United States Patent and Trademark Office not later than the expiration of 30 months from the priority date: \* \* \* (2) the basic national fee (see § 1.492(a)). The 30-month time limit may not be extended." 37 C.F.R. § 1.495(b).*

**WARNING:** *If the translation of the international application and/or the oath or declaration have not been submitted by the applicant within thirty (30) months from the priority date, such requirements may be met within a time period set by the Office. 37 C.F.R. § 1.495(b)(2). The payment of the surcharge set forth in § 1.492(e) is required as a condition for accepting the oath or declaration later than thirty (30) months after the priority date. The payment of the processing fee set forth in § 1.492(f) is required for acceptance of an English translation later than thirty (30) months after the priority date. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in abandonment of the application. The provisions of § 1.136 apply to the period which is set. Notice of Jan. 3, 1993, 1147 O.G. 29 to 40.*

3. [X] A copy of the International application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)):

NOTE: Section 1.495 (b) was amended to require that the basic national fee and a copy of the international application must be filed with the Office by 30 months from the priority date to avoid abandonment "The International Bureau normally provides the copy of the international application to the Office in accordance with PCT Article 20. At the same time, the International Bureau notifies applicant of the communication to the Office. In accordance with PCT Rule 47.1, that notice shall be accepted by all designated offices as conclusive evidence that the communication has duly taken place. Thus, if the applicant desires to enter the national stage, the applicant normally need only check to be sure the notice from the International Bureau has been received and then pay the basic national fee by 30 months from the priority date." Notice of Jan. 7, 1993, 1147 O.G. 29 to 40, at 35-36. See item 14c below.

a. ☒ is transmitted herewith.

b. ☐ is not required, as the application was filed with the United States Receiving Office.

c. ☐ has been transmitted

i. ☐ by the International Bureau.

Date of mailing of the application (from form PCT/IB/308): \_\_\_\_\_.

ii. ☐ by applicant on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

4. **[X]** A translation of the International application into the English language (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)):

a. ☐ is transmitted herewith.

b. ☐ is not required as the application was filed in English.

c. ☐ was previously transmitted by applicant on \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

d. ☒ will follow.

5. [ ] Amendments to the claims of the International application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)):

*NOTE: The Notice of January 7, 1993 points out that 37 C.F.R. § 1.495(a) was amended to clarify the existing and continuing practice that PCT Article 19 amendments must be submitted by 30 months from the priority date and this deadline may*

a. ☐ are transmitted herewith.

b. ☐ have been transmitted

i. ☐ by the International Bureau.  
Date of mailing of the amendment (from form PCT/IB/308): \_\_\_\_\_.

ii. ☐ by applicant on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

c. ☐ have not been transmitted as

i. ☐ applicant chose not to make amendments under PCT Article 19.  
Date of mailing of Search Report (from form PCT/ISA/210): \_\_\_\_\_.

ii. ☐ the time limit for the submission of amendments has not yet expired. The amendments or a statement that amendments have not been made will be transmitted before the expiration of the time limit under PCT Rule 46.1.

- (Transmittal Letter to the United States Elected Office (EO/US)—page 5 of 8)  
Express Mail Label No. EL 781 398 505 US  
Attorney Docket No. 65961-0015

iii. ☒ will follow.

Other document(s) or information included:

11. ☒ An International Search Report (PCT/ISA/210) or Declaration under PCT Article 17(2)(a):

- a. ☒ is transmitted herewith.
- b. ☐ has been transmitted by the International Bureau.  
Date of mailing (from form PCT/IB/308): \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. ☐ is not required, as the application was searched by the United States International Searching Authority.
- d. ☐ will be transmitted promptly upon request.
- e. ☐ has been submitted by applicant on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

12. ☒ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 C.F.R. 1.97 and 1.98:

- a. ☒ is transmitted herewith.  
Also transmitted herewith is/are:  
☒ Form PTO-1449 (PTO/SB/08A and 08B).  
☒ Copies of citations listed.
- b. ☐ will be transmitted within THREE MONTHS of the date of submission of requirements under 35 U.S.C. 371(c).
- c. ☐ was previously submitted by applicant on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

13. ☐ An assignment document is transmitted herewith for recording.

A separate ☐ "COVER SHEET FOR ASSIGNMENT (DOCUMENT) ACCOMPANYING NEW PATENT APPLICATION" or ☐ FORM PTO 1595 is also attached.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. ☒ Additional documents:

- a. ☐ Copy of request (PCT/RO/101)
- b. ☒ International Publication No. WO 00/68041
  - i. ☐ Specification, claims and drawing
  - ii. ☒ Front page only
- c. ☒ Preliminary amendment (37 C.F.R. § 1.121)
- d. ☐ Other

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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15. ☒ The above checked items are being transmitted  
a. ☒ before 30 months from any claimed priority date.  
b. ☐ after 30 months.
16. ☐ Certain requirements under 35 U.S.C. 371 were previously submitted by the applicant on \_\_\_\_\_, namely:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### AUTHORIZATION TO CHARGE ADDITIONAL FEES

**WARNING:** *Accurately count claims, especially multiple dependent claims, to avoid unexpected high charges if extra claims are authorized.*

**NOTE:** *"A written request may be submitted in an application that is an authorization to treat any concurrent or future reply, requiring a petition for an extension of time under this paragraph for its timely submission, as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time. An authorization to charge all required fees, fees under § 1.17, or all required extension of time fees will be treated as a constructive petition for an extension of time in any concurrent or future reply requiring a petition for an extension of time under this paragraph for its timely submission. Submission of the fee set forth in § 1.17(a) will also be treated as a constructive petition for an extension of time in any concurrent reply requiring a petition for an extension of time under this paragraph for its timely submission." 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a)(3).*

**NOTE:** *"Amounts of twenty-five dollars or less will not be returned unless specifically requested within a reasonable time, nor will the payer be notified of such amounts; amounts over twenty-five dollars may be returned by check or, if requested, by credit to a deposit account." 37 C.F.R. § 1.26(a).*

☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the following additional fees that may be required by this paper and during the entire pendency of this application to Account No. 18-0013.

☒ 37 C.F.R. 1.492(a)(1), (2), (3), and (4) (filing fees)

**WARNING:** *Because failure to pay the national fee within 30 months without extension (37 C.F.R. § 1.495(b)(2)) results in abandonment of the application, it would be best to always check the above box.*

☒ 37 C.F.R. 1.492(b), (c) and (d) (presentation of extra claims)

**NOTE:** *Because additional fees for excess or multiple dependent claims not paid on filing or on later presentation must only be paid or these claims cancelled by amendment prior to the expiration of the time period set for response by the PTO in any notice of fee deficiency (37 C.F.R. § 1.492(d)), it might be best not to authorize the PTO to charge additional claim fees, except possible when dealing with amendments after final action.*

☒ 37 C.F.R. 1.17 (application processing fees)

☒ 37 C.F.R. 1.17(a)(1)-(5)(extension fees pursuant to § 1.136(a).

☐ 37 C.F.R. 1.18 (issue fee at or before mailing of Notice of Allowance, pursuant

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to 37 C.F.R. 1.311(b))

*NOTE: Where an authorization to charge the issue fee to a deposit account has been filed before the mailing of a Notice of Allowance, the issue fee will be automatically charged to the deposit account at the time of mailing the notice of allowance. 37 C.F.R. § 1.311(b).*

*NOTE: 37 C.F.R. 1.28(b) requires "Notification of any change in loss of entitlement to small entity status must be filed in the application . . . prior to paying, or at the time of paying . . . issue fee." From the wording of 37 C.F.R. § 1.28(b): (a) notification of change of status must be made even if the fee is paid as "other than a small entity" and (b) no notification is required if the change is to another small entity.*

☒ 37 C.F.R. § 1.492(e) and (f) (surcharge fees for filing the declaration and/or filing an English translation of an International Application later than 30 months after the priority date).

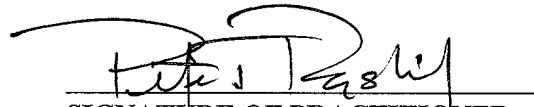
Date:

11/6/01

Reg. No. 39,464

Tel. No.: (248) 594-0624

Customer No. 010291



**SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER**

Peter J. Rashid

RADER, FISHMAN & GRAUER PLLC

39533 Woodward Avenue,

Suite 140

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48304

R0129354.DOC



Rec'd PCT/PTO 14 MAR 2002

Attorney Docket No. 65961-0015  
702501US

EV 051 008 944 US

#4/B

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of: Walter et al.

Int'l Application No.: PCT/AT00/00123

Int'l Filing Date: 05/May/2000

Serial No.: 09/979,541 Group Art Unit: Unknown

Filed: 11/06/2001 Examiner: Unknown

For: LINING FOR COLUMNS OF AUTOMOBILES

Box PCT  
Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

CERTIFICATE OF EXPRESS MAILING (37 C.F.R. § 1.10)

I hereby certify that this Amendment and the papers indicated as being transmitted therewith are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as Express Mail No. EV051008944US, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Box PCT, Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231 on this 14<sup>TH</sup> day of March, 2002.

Signature

*Sarah J. Goodwin*

Date:

3/14/2002

Sarah J. Goodwin

SUPPLEMENTARY PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Dear Sir:

Please amend the application prior to examination on the merits as follows:

**IN THE ABSTRACT:**

Please add the following Abstract:

--The invention relates to a lining for columns of automobiles comprising a base area (1) with fixing and holding elements (4) and at least one opening area (2) covering, for example, an airbag (3). According to the invention, the opening area (2) consists largely of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of more than 100 and has a hinge area (6) consisting of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95, which adjoins the base area (1). --

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel Claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Please add Claims 5-9 as follows:

5 . (New) A lining for columns of automobiles, comprising:

a base area with fixing and holding elements and at least one opening area covering an airbag, wherein the at least one opening area comprises a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100 and has a hinge area adjoining the base area and consisting essentially of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95.

6. (New) The lining as claimed in claim 5, wherein the opening area is further bounded by one of intended fracture lines and wall thickness reductions adjoining the hinge area.

7. (New) The lining as claimed in claim 5, wherein the hinge area consists essentially of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness between 30 and 95, preferably between 60 and 80.

8. (New) The lining as claimed in claim 7, wherein the hinge area consists essentially of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness between 60 and 80.

9. (New) The lining as claimed in claim 5, wherein the base area and the opening area together with the hinge area are covered by a unified decorative layer.

**REMARKS**

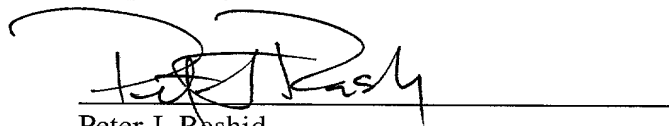
Prior to a formal examination of the above-identified application, acceptance of the new claims and the enclosed substitute specification (under 37 CFR 1.125) is respectfully requested. It is believed that the substitute specification and new claims will facilitate processing of the application in accordance with M.P.E.P. 608.01(q). The substitute specification and new claims are in compliance with 37 CFR 1.52 (a and b) and, while making no substantive changes, are submitted to conform this case to the formal requirements and long-established formal standards of U.S. Patent Office practice, and to provide improved idiom and better grammatical form.

The enclosed substitute specification is presented herein in both marked-up and clean versions.

**STATEMENT**

The undersigned, an attorney registered to practice before the office, hereby states that the enclosed substitute specification includes the same changes as are indicated in the mark-up copy of the original specification. The substitute specification contains no new subject matter.

Respectfully submitted,



Peter J. Rashid  
Registration No. 39,464  
Rader, Fishman and Grauer PLLC  
39533 N. Woodward Ave., Suite 140  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48304  
(248) 594-0624  
Attorney for Applicants

65961-0015

#3/  
1a

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of: Peter WALTER et al.

Int'l Application No.: PCT/AT00/00123

Int'l Filing Date: 05/May/2000

Serial No.:

Group Art Unit:

Filed:

Herewith

Examiner:

For:

LINING FOR COLUMNS OF AUTOMOBILES

Attorney Docket No.: 65961-0015

Paper No.

Box PCT  
Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231  
Attn: EO/US

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Dear Sir:

Please amend the application as follows prior to examination on the merits.

**IN THE CLAIMS**

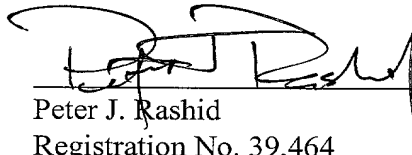
Please cancel claims 2-4 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING/TRANSMISSION (37 CFR 1.8(a))	
I hereby certify that this correspondence is, on the date shown below, being:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as Express Mail, Post Office to Addressee, Mailing Label No. <u>EL 781398505 US</u> addressed to Box PCT, Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC 20231	<input type="checkbox"/> transmitted by facsimile to the Patent and Trademark Office to Examiner _____ at _____
Date: <u>11/6/2001</u>	Signature: <u>JANICE E. LAURRO</u>

**REMARKS**

Prior to a formal examination of the above-identified application, Claims 2-4 have been cancelled to remove any multiple dependent claims.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Peter J. Rashid

Registration No. 39,464

Rader, Fishman and Grauer PLLC

39533 Woodward Ave., Suite 140

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48304

(248) 594-0624

Attorney for Applicant

R0129373.DOC

SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION: MARKED UP COPY

### LINING FOR COLUMNS OF AUTOMOBILES

[0001] The invention relates to a lining for columns of automobiles, comprising a base area with fixing and holding elements and at least one opening area, covering an airbag, for example.

[0002] In many automobiles of more recent design, it is common, in addition to the airbags which are arranged in the steering wheel cover or in the dashboard on the passenger's side, also to provide side airbags, as they are called, as a supplement, which may be integrated into the side lining of the automobile. For example, side airbags of this type are accommodated in the column lining of the automobiles.

[0003] In this connection, EP 0 894 679 A has disclosed a column lining for columns of automobiles which comprises at least one opening area and at least one fixing area.

[0004] In this case, the fixing area consists of a relatively hard thermoplastic from the group comprising polypropylene, acryl butadiene styrene copolymers and acryl butadiene styrene polycarbonate copolymers with a Shore A hardness greater than 100. On the other hand, the entire opening area consists of a softer thermoplastic with a preferred Shore A hardness of from 60 to 80. By using two thermoplastics of differing hardness, splintering of the column lining when the airbag is triggered or emerges is largely avoided.

[0005] One drawback is simply that the column linings in automobiles in particular are exposed to high temperature loadings or great temperature fluctuations, and the opening area consisting of a relatively soft thermoplastic material cannot meet the strict requirements with regard to dimensional stability.

[0006] It is an object of the invention to improve a column lining of the type mentioned at the beginning in such a way that adequate dimensional stability is ensured with simple means.

[0007] According to the invention, this object is achieved by the opening area consisting largely of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100 and having a

hinge area, adjoining the base area, consisting of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95.

[0008] According to the invention, a large part of the opening area can thus consist of the same thermoplastic material as the base area and can be produced with the latter in one operation. Only a hinge area of the opening area, integrated into the base area, consists of a softer thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 90. Since the majority of the opening area consists of the harder material, adequate dimensional stability of the lining part can be achieved.

[0009] If the hinge area does not reach as far as the edge of the respective lining part, according to the invention the opening area can be bounded by intended fracture lines, wall thickness reductions, etc. adjoining the hinge area.

[0010] A visually satisfactory appearance is ensured by the base area and the opening area, together with the hinge area, being covered by a unified decorative layer.

[0011] The invention will be explained in more detail below by using drawings. Figure 1 shows a lining according to the invention for columns of automobiles in plan view, and figure 2 shows a section along the line II-II in figure 1 in an enlarged illustration.

[0012] The column lining illustrated in figures 1 and 2 has a base area 1 and an opening area 2, the opening area 2 covering an airbag 3, for example. As can be seen from figure 2, the base area 1 has fixing and holding elements 4, with which the lining part can be fixed to the column 5 of the automobile. The opening area 2 largely consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100, only a hinge area 6 adjoining the base area 1 consists of a softer thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 90.

[0013] The hinge area 6 may reach as far as the outer edge of the lining part or, as illustrated in figure 1, can have intended fracture lines or wall thickness reductions 7 adjoining the hinge area 6.

[0014] The hinge area advantageously consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness between 30 and 95, preferably with a Shore A hardness between 60 and 80.



[0015] Suitable materials for the base area 1 are, in particular, thermoplastics from the group comprising polypropylene, ABS and ABS-polycarbonate blends.

[0016] Suitable materials for the hinge area 6 are, in particular, thermoplastic elastomers or elastomer alloys of thermoplastics and elastomers.

[0017] The base area 1 and the opening area 2, together with the hinge area 6, can preferably be covered by a unified decorative layer.

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**SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION: CLEAN COPY**

**LINING FOR COLUMNS OF AUTOMOBILES**

[0001] The invention relates to a lining for columns of automobiles, comprising a base area with fixing and holding elements and at least one opening area, covering an airbag, for example.

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[0006] It is an object of the invention to improve a column lining of the type mentioned at the beginning in such a way that adequate dimensional stability is ensured with simple means.

[0007] According to the invention, this object is achieved by the opening area consisting largely of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100 and having a

hinge area, adjoining the base area, consisting of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95.

[0008] According to the invention, a large part of the opening area can thus consist of the same thermoplastic material as the base area and can be produced with the latter in one operation. Only a hinge area of the opening area, integrated into the base area, consists of a softer thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 90. Since the majority of the opening area consists of the harder material, adequate dimensional stability of the lining part can be achieved.

[0009] If the hinge area does not reach as far as the edge of the respective lining part, according to the invention the opening area can be bounded by intended fracture lines, wall thickness reductions, etc. adjoining the hinge area.

[0010] A visually satisfactory appearance is ensured by the base area and the opening area, together with the hinge area, being covered by a unified decorative layer.

[0011] The invention will be explained in more detail below by using drawings. Figure 1 shows a lining according to the invention for columns of automobiles in plan view, and figure 2 shows a section along the line II-II in figure 1 in an enlarged illustration.

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[0013] The hinge area 6 may reach as far as the outer edge of the lining part or, as illustrated in figure 1, can have intended fracture lines or wall thickness reductions 7 adjoining the hinge area 6.

[0014] The hinge area advantageously consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness between 30 and 95, preferably with a Shore A hardness between 60 and 80.

[0015] Suitable materials for the base area 1 are, in particular, thermoplastics from the group comprising polypropylene, ABS and ABS-polycarbonate blends.

[0016] Suitable materials for the hinge area 6 are, in particular, thermoplastic elastomers or elastomer alloys of thermoplastics and elastomers.

[0017] The base area 1 and the opening area 2, together with the hinge area 6, can preferably be covered by a unified decorative layer.

65961-0015 (702501US)  
09/979,541

**Rec'd PCT/PTO 14 MAR 2002**

## LINING FOR COLUMNS OF AUTOMOBILES

The invention relates to a lining for columns of automobiles, comprising a base area with fixing and holding elements and at least one opening area, covering an airbag, for example.

In many automobiles of more recent design, it is common, in addition to the airbags which are arranged in the steering wheel cover or in the dashboard on the passenger's side, also to provide side airbags, as they are called, as a supplement, which may be integrated into the side lining of the automobile. For example, side airbags of this type are accommodated in the column lining of the automobiles.

In this connection, EP 0 894 679 A has disclosed a column lining for columns of automobiles which comprises at least one opening area and at least one fixing area.

In this case, the fixing area consists of a relatively hard thermoplastic from the group comprising polypropylene, acryl butadiene styrene copolymers and acryl butadiene styrene polycarbonate copolymers with a Shore A hardness greater than 100. On the other hand, the entire opening area consists of a softer thermoplastic with a preferred Shore A hardness of from 60 to 80. By using two thermoplastics of differing hardness, splintering of the column lining when the airbag is triggered or emerges is largely avoided.

One drawback is simply that the column linings in automobiles in particular are exposed to high temperature loadings or great temperature fluctuations, and the opening area consisting of a relatively soft thermoplastic material cannot meet the strict requirements with regard to dimensional stability.

It is an object of the invention to improve a column lining of the type mentioned at the beginning in such a way that adequate dimensional stability is ensured with simple means.

According to the invention, this object is achieved by the opening area consisting largely of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100 and having a hinge area, adjoining the base area, consisting of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95.

According to the invention, a large part of the opening area can thus consist of the same thermoplastic material as the base area and can be produced with the latter in one operation. Only a hinge area of the opening area, integrated into the base area, consists of a softer thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 90. Since the majority of the opening area consists of the harder material, adequate dimensional stability of the lining part can be achieved.

If the hinge area does not reach as far as the edge of the respective lining part, according to the invention the

opening area can be bounded by intended fracture lines, wall thickness reductions, etc. adjoining the hinge area.

A visually satisfactory appearance is ensured by the base area and the opening area, together with the hinge area, being covered by a unified decorative layer.

The invention will be explained in more detail below by using drawings. Figure 1 shows a lining according to the invention for columns of automobiles in plan view, and figure 2 shows a section along the line II-II in figure 1 in an enlarged illustration.

The column lining illustrated in figures 1 and 2 has a base area 1 and an opening area 2, the opening area 2 covering an airbag 3, for example. As can be seen from figure 2, the base area 1 has fixing and holding elements 4, with which the lining part can be fixed to the column 5 of the automobile. The opening area 2 largely consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100, only a hinge area 6 adjoining the base area 1 consists of a softer thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 90.

The hinge area 6 may reach as far as the outer edge of the lining part or, as illustrated in figure 1, can have intended fracture lines or wall thickness reductions 7 adjoining the hinge area 6.

The hinge area advantageously consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness between 30 and 95, preferably with a Shore A hardness between 60 and 80.

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Suitable materials for the base area 1 are, in particular, thermoplastics from the group comprising polypropylene, ABS and ABS-polycarbonate blends.

Suitable materials for the hinge area 6 are, in particular, thermoplastic elastomers or elastomer alloys of thermoplastics and elastomers.

The base area 1 and the opening area 2, together with the hinge area 6, can preferably be covered by a unified decorative layer.

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PATENT CLAIMS

1. A lining for columns of automobiles, comprising a base area (1) with fixing and holding elements (4) and at least one opening area (2), covering an airbag (3), for example, characterized in that the opening area (2) largely consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness greater than 100, and has a hinge area (6) adjoining the base area (1) and consisting of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95.

2. The lining as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the opening area (2) is further bounded by intended fracture lines, wall thickness reductions (7), etc adjoining the hinge area (6).

3. The lining as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the hinge area (6) consists of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness between 30 and 95, preferably between 60 and 80.

4. The lining as claimed in one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the base area (1) and the opening area (2), together with the hinge area (6), are covered by a unified decorative layer (8).

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(71) Anmelder (für alle Bestimmungsstaaten ausser US): MAGNA  
EYBL GMBH [AT/AT]; Götzendorfer Strasse 3-5, A-2435  
Ebergassing (AT).

(72) Erfinder; und

(75) Erfinder/Anmelder (nur für US): WALTER, Peter [AT/AT];  
Kirchengasse 15A, A-7062 St. Margarethen (AT).  
HAHNEKAMP, Richard [AT/AT]; Klosterriedgasse 10A,  
A-7000 Eisenstadt (AT). STEINER, Karl [AT/AT]; Dr.  
Adolf Schärff Strasse 4, A-2435 Ebergassing (AT).

(74) Anwalt: KOVAC, Werner; Magna Europa AG, 2. Haidequer-  
strasse 3, A-1111 Wien (AT).

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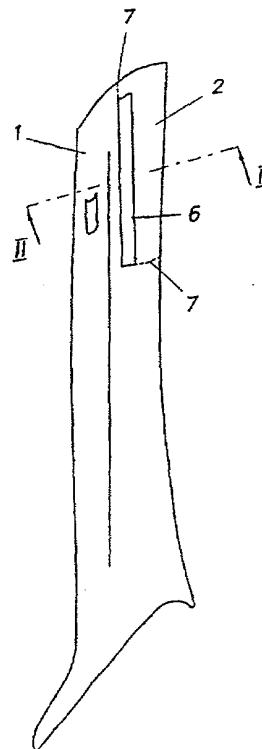
(54) Bezeichnung: VERKLEIDUNG FÜR SÄULEN VON KRAFTFAHRZEUGEN

(57) Abstract

The invention relates to a lining for columns of automobiles, comprising a base area (1) with fixing and holding elements (4) and at least one opening area (2), covering an airbag (3), for example. According to the invention, the opening area (2) consists largely of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of more than 100 and has a hinge area (6) consisting of a thermoplastic material with a Shore A hardness of less than 95, which adjoins the base area (1).

(57) Zusammenfassung

Bei einer Verkleidung für Säulen von Kraftfahrzeugen mit einem Basisbereich (1) mit Befestigungs- und Halteelementen (4) und zumindest einem, beispielsweise einen Airbag (3) abdeckenden Öffnungsbereich (2) ist vorgesehen, dass der Öffnungsbereich (2) grossteils aus einem thermoplastischen Material mit einer Shore-A-Härte grösser 100 besteht und einen an den Basisbereich (1) angrenzenden Scharnierbereich (6) aus einem thermoplastischen Material mit einer Shore-A-Härte kleiner 95 aufweist.



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## Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

### English Language Declaration

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

the specification of which

(check one)

☐ is attached hereto.

☒ was filed on 05 May 2000 as United States Application No. or PCT International Application Number PCT/AT 00/00123

and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_

(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d) or Section 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or Section 385(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Not Claimed

<u>A 817 99</u>	<u>Austria</u>	<u>05 May 1999</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<u>(Day/Month/Year Filed)</u>	
<u>(Number)</u>		<u>(Day/Month/Year Filed)</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>(Number)</u>	<u>(Country)</u>	<u>(Day/Month/Year Filed)</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. Section 119(a) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)
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(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)
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(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)
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I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U. S. C. Section 120 of any United States application(s), or Section 385(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. Section 112. I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, C.F.R., Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application.

(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
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(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
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(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. (list name and registration number)

Peter J. Rashid, 39,464

Send Correspondence to: Rader, Fishman & Grauer PLLC  
Suite 140  
39533 Woodward Avenue  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48304

Direct Telephone Calls to: (name and telephone number)  
Peter J. Rashid, Esq., 248-594-0624

Full name of sole or first inventor <u>Peter WALTER</u>	<u>Peter Walter</u>	<u>25.02.2002</u>
Sole or first inventor's signature		Date
Residence <u>Kirchengasse 15a, A-7062 St. Margarethen, AUSTRIA</u>	<u>ATX</u>	
Citizenship <u>Austrian</u>		
Post Office Address <u>Same as above</u>		

Full name of second inventor, if any <u>Richard HAHNEKAMP</u>	<u>Richard Hahnekamp</u>	<u>26.02.2002</u>
Second inventor's signature		Date
Residence <u>Klosterriedgasse 10a, A-7000 Eisenstadt, AUSTRIA</u>	<u>ATX</u>	
Citizenship <u>Austrian</u>		
Post Office Address <u>Same as above</u>		

3-00

Full name of third inventor, if any <b>Karl STEINER</b>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>6.12.2002</i>
Third inventor's signature		Date
Residence <b>A-2435 Ebergsdang, AUSTRIA ATX</b>		
Citizenship <b>Austrian</b>		
Post Office Address <b>Same as above</b>		

Full name of fourth inventor, if any		
Fourth inventor's signature		Date
Residence		
Citizenship		
Post Office Address		

Full name of fifth inventor, if any		
Fifth inventor's signature		Date
Residence		
Citizenship		
Post Office Address		

Full name of sixth inventor, if any		
Sixth inventor's signature		Date
Residence		
Citizenship		
Post Office Address		

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